King County
Department of Judicial Administration

Electronic Court Records (ECR)

APPENDIX 2:
Project Process Critique

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This document provides assessments of the Electronic Court Records (ECR) project conducted and presented by SJI-funded SMG/Columbia Consulting. The assessments provide an overview of the project, its strong points and noted problems. It is hoped that the assessments will help other courts and clerks to learn from King County experience as they engage in planning or implementation of sizable information system projects.

SMG/Columbia Consulting First Assessment, May 1997

During 1995 and 1996, the Department of Judicial Administration (DJA) developed a "vision" for the introduction of "Electronic Court Records" (ECR) into the King County Superior Court system. Under a grant provided by the State Justice Institute, SMG/Columbia was engaged by DJA to provide management consulting support to the Electronic Court Records Project. This report presents the first assessment of the ECR Project under this contract.

This assessment is supported by working papers and other documents included as attachments to this report.

Recommended Changes to the Framework Plan

The vision for ECR has significant potential for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the Superior Court system in King County. The ECR Project is broadly consistent with trends in other court jurisdictions and with information technology trends.

However, achieving the vision for ECR would involve major "reengineering" of the operating procedures of the overall Superior Court system. Such a broad undertaking extends beyond the authority of DJA and is impractical as the scope of a single project. The vision does define an overall strategic direction for the introduction of ECR into the King County Superior Court system, but does not establish tangible objectives and timelines for implementation.

Therefore, DJA should develop a "doable" project scope for those ECR-related information systems and process changes which can be implemented during the next few years. This is referred to in this document as the "ECR Implementation Project." The implementation project will be the primary focus of the ECR Project during this period.

In addition to this core implementation project, the ECR initiative will continue to have several other streams of activity. For example, DJA will need to continue to participate in and coordinate with changes in laws and policies at the state level which affect the introduction of ECR to the Superior Court. DJA will also need to continue to coordinate with information systems developments by other agencies within the King County and with changes in state-wide court information systems. Other activities within the scope of the project include the microfilm replacement project and the criminal demonstration project.

In developing the scope for the ECR Implementation Project for the next few years, the following considerations should be taken into account:

1.   The primary, though not exclusive, focus should be on matters under the control of DJA.

2.   The focus should be on records management procedures, including document filing, court file maintenance, and public access to court records.

3.   With specific support of other court system agencies and parties can be obtained, ECR technology should be used to provide remote document filing and access services.

4.   A specific time period should be established within which the initial ECR system will be implemented. The year 2000 has been established as a target date for implementing ECR.

These principles help provide the basis for developing an implementation plan which can be used to formally evaluate progress of the ECR Project.

Based on the preceding assessment, the immediate priorities for ECR Project should be as follows:

1.   Develop a "design statement" which clearly defines, in functional and operational terms, the scope of the systems to be implemented by the year 2000.

2.   Complete the development of the specifications for the technology required to implement the systems described in the design statement.

3.   In conjunction with these specifications, develop estimates of the costs associated with acquiring, implementing, and operating the ECR system.

4.   Estimate the financial and non-financial benefits which may be realized with the implementation of the ECR system. Cost/benefit analyses will help to justify proceeding with the project.

5.   Continue to identify and build opportunities for inter-agency cooperation. The "Criminal Demonstration" project is an example of this.

6.   When consensus has been reached regarding the scope the ECR Implementation Project, develop a summary plan for project activities and anticipated results for the years 1997 through 2000.

7.   Develop a formal project evaluation model based on defined scope and plan for ECR implementation.

Completion of these tasks will position DJA and the ECR Project to undertake subsequent project tasks. This would include instituting a communications program with stakeholders regarding the scope and timing of the ECR Implementation Project. DJA will also install an imaging / electronic document management system to replace microfilming of court files and to provide a platform for "proof-of-concept" testing.

Summary of Findings from Stakeholder Consultations

DJA has, during the last several years, consulted extensively with individuals, groups, and organizations with an interest in electronic court records. In addition to building awareness of and support for the project, this process has helped generate ideas for a number of potential applications of ECR technology within the broader Superior Court system.

There is a risk that this process may also have created expectations on the part of some parties concerning the capabilities of the ECR system which may not be met in the short to medium term. With the completion of the design statement, DJA will be able to manage these expectations proactively. Of particular importance will be communicating what services the ECR system will deliver by the year 2000. A plan for stakeholder consultation should be developed and carried out when the design statement and implementation project plan are complete.

A Steering Committee for the ECR Project has been well established, including representatives of the Judiciary, SCA, the Prosecutor's Office, the Court of Appeals, and other interested parties. During the initial phases of the project, this committee largely functioned as a forum for discussing the vision for ECR, issues regarding ECR-related policies, and other broad topics. Currently the operation of the Steering Committee focused on resolving specific issues regarding the system and project. That is, the Steering Committee is starting to function in an oversight capacity and to provide direction to the project team regarding the conduct of the project.

DJA is also planning to institute an Advisory Committee composed of various state-wide groups with an interest in the ECR Project. The Advisory Committee is to include representatives from the Office of the Administrator of the Courts, the State Supreme Court, law libraries, the Washington State Bar Association, and other groups. The Advisory Committee can play an important role in assisting DJA to coordinate changes in legal policy and court information systems affecting with the ECR Project.

Interim Evaluation of ECR Initiative

As described above, the "ECR Initiative" is a long term, strategic direction for the introduction of electronic court records. However, the vision for ECR does not establish a firm baseline for formal evaluation of project progress. This is because the timing and scope of implementation project are not yet clearly defined. The formal project evaluation model has been deferred while the scope of the ECR system is better defined and an implementation plan is completed.

While the evaluation model has been deferred, a qualitative assessment of the ECR Project has been conducted. The results of this assessment are largely summarized in the "*Recommended Changes to the Framework Plan*" above. The detailed assessment is included as Attachment 1 to this report.

Project Chronicle

Development of a "project chronicle" has been started. In addition, recommendations are being developed regarding how best to manage documentation arising from the project as well as documents from other sources which are relevant to ECR.

Other Findings and Recommendations

The appendices to this report present a variety of other findings and recommendations which were written and reviewed with DJA leadership.

Recommendations for Project Support Activities

Based on the current priorities for and the other resources assigned to the ECR Project, SMG/Columbia should now provide support in the following areas:

Complete development of the design statement setting the "target" for ECR implementation for the year 2000.

 Develop an initial assessment of the financial, operational, public service, and other impacts of the ECR system.

 Develop an initial assessment of the "market" for ECR system-related services in the private sector.

 Help DJA develop a preliminary plan for ECR implementation.

 Develop a project evaluation model based on the agreed upon scope of and plan for ECR implementation.

In addition, SMG/Columbia will continue to develop the project chronicle and carry out project assessments as detailed in its contract with DJA.

Appropriateness of the strategy of replacing paper court files with an electronic record

  "Document" expanded to include images, marked up text, etc.
  Internal work processes structured around data flows rather than paper flows
  Interactions with external parties also electronic
  Paper documents accepted, then scanned

The "vision" for ECR encompasses "reengineering" court system operations

  Seamless data transfer
  Data replaces paper
  Data flows replacing paper flows
  Integration with other information systems of agencies
  Organizational and geographic barriers minimized

ECR Project approach is broadly consistent with trends in other courts, though there are different technology strategies being employed, e.g.,

  Imaging
  EDI
  SGML/HTML
  PDF

The ECR Project strategy is also consistent with a much broader trend toward "electronic commerce"

This vision is not achievable within the context of the ECR Project

  Independence concerns
  Organizational boundaries
  Legal procedures and practices beyond control of DJA
  State-wide IT constraints
  Financial, technical, and personnel resource constraints
  Lack of commitment by stakeholders

Continue to evaluate and develop the ECR strategy and plan for its implementation

Define a "doable" scope for the ECR Project for the next two or three year

If a more comprehensive approach to restructuring court system operations is undertaken, evaluate if and how the ECR Project can contribute

Definition of the "doable" scope for the ECR Project

       Participants: Judiciary, SCA, DJA, other agencies/groups
       Processes
       Systems

SCA and DJA operations are interconnected and overlapping

       Redundant record keeping and data entry functions
       Significant effort to coordinate operations

However, SCA and DJA are independent agencies with differing objectives and priorities

       SCA is focused on court events
       DJA is focused on maintaining permanent record of case
       Separate management / organizations
       Separate IT strategies / support groups

Other justice system agencies and groups are also independent

       Neither Superior Court nor DJA can direct cooperation
       Voluntary agreements required

Other agencies and groups are interested and involved in the ECR Project, but commitment is limited

       Funding of ECR activities
       Assignment of staff resources
       Contribution of technology resources

Focus of the ECR Project should be:

1.   The Department of Judicial Administration
2.   Court records management processes and procedures
3.   Specific "external" applications of ECR where agreement on process / system changes are possible

Plan for achieving mid-term objectives of the ECR Project

While a general focus has been established for the ECR Project, systematic progress requires a more tangible plan

Identification of major processes to be reengineered using ECR technology
Definition of the major ECR system deliverables
Development of a summary plan
Definition of project oversight and management mechanisms

The timing of the implementation of ECR technology is subject to several uncontrollable factors

Availability of funding and other resources
Changes in law, policy, and practice
IT changes mandated by State OR OAC
Cooperation and support of other justice system agencies / groups

Define a set of tangible objectives for the ECR Project which appear to be "doable" during the next two to three years (depending on resource availability)

Internal DJA records management processes
Limited number of "external" applications of ECR
Technologies to be implemented
Integration of ECR with other systems

Consult with other agencies regarding inter-agency or "external" applications of ECR technology

Costs and benefits
Impact on other technology plans
Support and commitment

Develop a summary plan for ECR implementation which emphasizes flexibility

Identifying those potential "external" (i.e., outside of DJA) applications of ECR which will be included within the scope of this project

Variety of opportunities have been discussed for using ECR technology for mutual benefit

Judiciary
In-court access to court record

Opportunities for "external applications" of ECR should be identified as part of ECR Project planning

Priorities should be defined based on factors such as:

Minimize need for separate "working paper" copies of pleadings, orders, and other key documents
Access to case files from remote locations
Link court documents to legal research databases

SCA

Minimize need to maintain working papers
Reduce coordination/liaison with DJA regarding case information
Capture schedule-related data from document filings

Attorneys / Litigants

Electronic filing
"Single point" of service with both SCA and DJA
Electronic service of documents

General Public

Remote access to court records

Limited analysis has been undertaken to determine the priorities for external use of ECR

The "gap" between the expectations raised by the "reengineering vision" and practical considerations

1. Support of other agencies
2. Impact in terms of productivity or service quality
3. Cost of acquisition, implementation, and operation

Develop and document agreements with other agencies regarding any joint endeavors to be undertaken by the ECR Project

Much of the "marketing" of the ECR Project has focused on the longer term potential of this technology in "reengineering" the court system, e.g.,

When the ECR Project has developed a pragmatic scope of work for the next two to three years, DJA and its partners should systematically communicate these more modest objectives to key

Seamless data transfer
Data replacing paper
Integration with other information systems of agencies
Organizational and geographic barriers minimized

stakeholder groups

King County Superior Court Judiciary
King County Executive Budget Office
Other King County justice system agencies and groups with an established interest in ECR
Staff and management in DJA and SCA
IT staff in DJA, SCA, ITS

As discussed above, the ECR Project will not be delivering these benefits, at least in the foreseeable future

Given these expectations, no matter how successful in delivering improvements in records management within DJA, the ECR Project is at risk of being perceived to be a failure

The secondary message of this communication should be that ECR may facilitate future reengineering initiatives.

Development of the "Evaluation Model" for ECR Project

A key purpose of the "evaluation model" for the ECR Project is to provide a mechanism for measuring progress. However, there are no clear targets for the project at this time

Develop the "evaluation model" in concert with the development of the two- to three year plan for the ECR Project

"Completeness" of current project plans

DJA has several subprojects or activities underway at this time which are part of or related to the ECR Project

Technical Standards/Architecture
EDM Workflow Team
Microfilm replacement / scanning project
Criminal ECR Demonstration

Develop plan for ECR Project for the next two to three years which provides greater specificity with regard to deliverables and outcomes

Reevaluate the completeness of the ECR Project activities in light of these more specific objectives

Project
    ECR Project Support
    Participation in King County
EDM policy and technology standards
setting
    Participation in JIS and other
state-wide initiatives

*These activities are all consistent with
the overall objectives for the ECR
Project. However, because of the lack
of specificity regarding deliverables and
results, it is not possible to determine
which additional tasks DJA should be
undertaking*

Justifying ECR

*There are some significant concerns
regarding the desirability of ECR
technology*

    Significant "up front"
investments to evaluate and plan for
ECR
    Very large investments to
acquire and implement ECR
    Additional costs to interface
ECR with existing systems in DJA and
in other agencies
    Effort and disruption associated
with redesigning processes and
retraining staff and "customers"
    Policy and legal issues

*The ECR Project must begin to develop
clear justifications for the introduction of*

*ECR Project team should be alert to
opportunities to "roll out" applications
which demonstrate effectiveness of this
technology*

*DJA should consider undertaking a
specific subproject during 1997 to
assess the potential costs and benefits
(financial, operational, service, etc.) of
ECR*

this technology

More effective use of Judicial time
Productivity / staff savings
Cost avoidance
Building occupancy cost containment
Resolving operational issues (e.g., remote access to files at another court location)
Improvements in service to general public

Potential inconsistencies of IT plans of SCA and DJA	*SCA and DJA operate separate systems in support of their separate operations. These separate systems are supported by separate groups. There are several risks associated with this situation*	*Evaluate options for improved and more coordinated management of IT by SCA and DJA*
	Systems such as ECR or CMIS automate court processes. If the applications are not coordinated, the processes may be adversely affected Inefficiencies will occur in data capture and other administrative procedures The systems will contain inconsistent information Uncoordinated system changes will tend to have unplanned side effects	*Systematically share detailed plans for information systems changes between the two organizations. This information sharing should extend beyond the IT support staff and include operational managers*
	SCA existing and planned systems may	

overlap with ECR, e.g., electronic "filing" of criminal case initiation information by the Prosecutor, recording dispositions, etc. There is an obvious opportunity to avoid redundancy and minimize procedural and system inconsistencies

| *Potential inconsistencies with directions of JIS or other state IT initiatives* | *Documents, whether paper or electronic, must still be docketed, i.e., there is an inherent connection between SCOMIS and ECR. Realizing the full potential of ECR within DJA may require restructuring of docketing workflows and development of system interfaces* | *Continue to participate actively in planning for state-wide systems*

The technology planning subproject should evaluate alternatives for the linkages between ECR and SCOMIS and other state-wide systems |

Automated capture of docketing data
Automated transfer of docketing information from ECR to SCOMIS (or the reverse)
"Front end" versus "back end" strategies for capturing documents electronically

The evolution of SCOMIS and other state-wide systems is not under the control of the King County Superior Court, King County, or DJA. There is a material risk that these systems may not be consistent with plans for ECR

Similarly, these externally managed initiatives may not be consistent with the plans of SCA for case management applications

An "Advisory Committee" familiar with state-wide initiatives and other IT initiatives affecting the Superior Court should periodically review ECR Project results and plans

Identify potential inconsistencies or conflicts
Systematic resolution of common policy issues
Identify potential "joint ventures"

Rapidly evolving technology and technology risk	*Many of the technologies under consideration by DJA for use in ECR are rapidly evolving. Making it very difficult to select "winners"*	*Avoid, if possible, any early commitment to a single form of electronic document (e.g., TIFF images, data, marked up text, Word or WordPerfect files, etc.)*
	Similarly, it is difficult to predict which vendors will be successful in the longer term	*Incorporate the need for ongoing "migration" of technology in the development of technology standards and selection of specific products*
		Ensure project plans provide the flexibility required to incorporate technology changes
The need to replace paper files with ECR and not merely supplement paper file with ECR	*If DJA is not able to eliminate the paper record after the introduction of ECR, then the project cannot be justified*	*Continue to specifically address legal and policy implications of eliminating paper records*
	Legal or policy issues may force DJA to continue to maintain a physical file Users of the record may insist on using paper records Technological or procedural constraints make it impossible to deliver ECR on a timely basis Technology problems or privacy concerns cause limits to be placed on access	State legal reforms Approval of Judiciary King County policies Legal opinion, if necessary
		DJA should press for state-wide resolution to legal and policy issues
	The paper file can only be eliminated if the electronic record is acceptable from a legal and policy perspective	*Destroy paper records where documents are available in electronic form*

Limited resources available within DJA to undertake and manage ECR implementation	*To this point, the ECR Project activities have primarily been performed on a part-time basis by individuals with other responsibilities*	*The process of developing a "doable" project plan should consider the staff requirements and constraints*
	As project proceeds into detailed planning, design, and implementation phases, more resources and full-time resources will be required	*This plan must balance the scope of the project against the resource requirements and schedule constraints*
	The ECR Project will require experienced IT Project Leaders, developers, trainers, etc.	*DJA should begin to consider its options for acquiring technology project leaders and other technology personnel* Hiring ITS Contract personnel Systems integrators
Limited cooperation between DJA and SCA IT groups	*The IT groups in DJA and SCA have differing objectives, strategies, and priorities. This will tend to produce groups working at cross purposes* *The two groups do not have systematic mechanisms to coordinate their development and support activities*	*Recognize the risks posed by this ongoing organizational issue* *DJA and SCA should coordinate corrective actions*
Support and direction of Judiciary	*The introduction of ECR is not feasible without the ongoing support of the Judiciary* *In addition, it is important that there be a consistent vision of how ECR should employed* *The ECR Project also needs an*	*The Judiciary should be requested to identify a member of the Executive Committee with broad court and technology experience to oversee the ECR Project for its duration* *Involve other Judges in specific aspects of the project, e.g., involve a criminal Judge in the "Criminal Pilot"*

advocate within the Judiciary to build and sustain support

ECR Project Management

The ECR Project is not a "project" in the narrow definition of the term

Specific objectives
Defined deliverables
Defined schedule for completion

Instead, the ECR Project may better be understood as a broad "initiative" or "strategic direction" within which there will be a number of (narrowly defined) projects. The project management mechanisms need to reflect this fact

To date, the project has primarily been concerned with evaluating the potential for ECR and defining an overall strategy. It is now moving into a more detailed planning and evaluation phase. This phase of the project life cycle will need to be more structured than initial stages

With the completion of ECR Project plan discussed above, restructure project management and oversight mechanisms to achieve the following

More effective use of senior individuals' time
Focus limited time of senior personnel on making "directional" decisions
More formalized progress reporting of subprojects

Structure project activities into well defined subprojects with defined terms of reference, project plans, and schedules

Reduce the reliance on "committees" comprised of individuals with other responsibilities to complete project activities. Instead, assign individuals to be full-time project staff

Develop a plan setting specific objectives for the ECR Project during the next two to three years

ECR Project Assessment Report

Second SMG/Consulting Assessment: September 1997

Under a grant provided by the State Justice Institute, SMG/Columbia was engaged by the King County Department of Judicial Administration (DJA) to provide management consulting support to the Electronic Court Records (ECR) Project. This report presents the second assessment of the ECR Project under this contract.

Since the first assessment, completed on June 30, 1997, some significant progress has been made on the project. In particular:

- The "Design Statement," which translates the "vision" for ECR into a more specific project scope, has been reviewed with key stakeholders within the Superior Court system.

- Preliminary technical standards for electronic document management (EDM) technology have been developed.

- Preliminary cost estimates for the acquisition and implementation of the ECR system have been developed.

- Preliminary ECR Project milestones have been defined for the remainder of 1997 and 1998. These milestones are intended to be incorporated into the project work plan.

- An interim EDM hardware and software solution has been selected. This interim solution will provide a platform for microfilm replacement imaging and "proof-of-concept" testing.

- DJA has been preparing court files for scanning as part of the microfilm replacement

With greater clarity emerging regarding the scope of the ECR system, the project has now entered a new phase. The current priority for the project is the development of a formal project work plan.

Recommended Changes to the Framework Plan

The previous assessment report noted that the vision for ECR would involve major "reengineering" of the operating procedures of the overall Superior Court system, which is beyond the authority of DJA and is impractical as the scope for a single project. The assessment recommended that DJA develop a "doable" project scope for those ECR-related information systems and process changes which can be implemented during the next few

years. This is referred to in this document as the "ECR Implementation Project." The implementation project will be the primary focus of the ECR Initiative during this period.

Development of a detailed project plan for the ECR Implementation Project is currently underway. While not yet documented, the plan includes several major streams or subprojects. These are:

1.   Implementation of the ECR system described in the Design Statement.
2.   Microfilm replacement imaging.
3.   Legal and policy issue resolution.
4.   Stakeholder involvement and communications.

In developing the scope for the ECR Implementation Project for the next few years, the following considerations should be taken into account:

1.   The primary, though not exclusive, focus should be on matters under the control of DJA.

2.   The focus should be on records management procedures, including document filing, court file maintenance, and public access to court files.

3.   Where specific support of other court system agencies and parties can be obtained, ECR technology should be use to provide remote document filing and access services.

4.   A specific time period should be established within which the initial ECR system will be implemented. The year 2000 has been selected as the target date for implementing the ECR system.

These principles help provide the basis for developing a tangible plan for implementation which can be used to formally evaluate progress of the ECR Project.

Based on the preceding assessment, the immediate priorities for ECR Project should be as follows:

1.   Develop a "Design Statement" which clearly defines, in functional and operational terms, the "target" system to be implemented.

2.   Complete the development of the specifications for the technology required to implement the systems described in the design statement.

ECR Project Assessment Report

3.   In conjunction with these specifications, develop estimates of the costs associated with acquiring, implementing, and operating the "target" ECR system.

4.   Begin to estimate the financial and non-financial benefits which may be realized with the implementation of the ECR system. These benefit estimates, together with ECR system cost estimates, are needed to justify proceeding with the project.

5.   Continue to identify and assess specific opportunities for inter-agency cooperation. The "Criminal Case Demonstration" project is an example of this.

6.   When a consensus has been reached regarding the scope the ECR Implementation Project, develop a summary plan for project activities and results for the years 1997 through 2000.

7.   Develop a formal project evaluation model based on defined scope and plan for ECR implementation.

Completion of these tasks will position DJA and the ECR Project to address subsequent project tasks. This would include instituting a communications program with stakeholders regarding the scope and timing of the ECR Implementation Project. DJA will also install an imaging / electronic document management system to replace microfilming of court files and to provide a platform for "proof-of-concept" testing.

Summary of Findings from Stakeholder Consultations

DJA has, during the last couple of years, consulted extensively with individuals, groups, and organizations with an interest in electronic court records. In addition to building awareness of and support for the project, this process has helped generate ideas for a number of potential applications of ECR technology within the broader Superior Court system.

There is a risk that this process may also have created expectations on the part of some parties concerning the capabilities of the ECR system which may not be met in the short to medium term. With the completion of the design statement, DJA will be in a position to begin to manage these expectations proactively. Of particular importance will be communicating what services the ECR system will deliver by the year 2000 and what is "out of scope." A plan for stakeholder consultation should be developed and carried out when the design statement and implementation project plan are complete.

A Steering Committee for the ECR Project has been established which includes representatives of the Judiciary, SCA, the Prosecutor's Office, the Court of Appeals, and other interested entities and groups. During the initial phases of the project, this committee largely functioned as a forum for discussing the vision for ECR, issues regarding ECR-related policies, and other broad topics. Currently the operation of the Steering Committee is being refocused

ECR Project Assessment Report

on resolving specific issues regarding the system and project. That is, the Steering Committee is starting to function in an oversight capacity and to provide direction to the project team regarding the conduct of the project.

DJA is also planning to institute an Advisory Committee composed of various state-wide groups with an interest in, though no direct role in overseeing, the ECR Project. The Advisory Committee includes representatives from the State Supreme Court, Office of the Administrator of the Courts, the Judicial Information System, and others. The Advisory Committee can play an important role in helping DJA to coordinate changes in legal policy and court information systems across the state with the ECR Project.

Interim Evaluation of ECR Initiative

As described above, the "ECR Initiative" is best considered as the long term, strategic direction for the introduction of electronic court records. Formal project evaluation, however, requires a clearly defined scope, objectives and work plan. While the ECR Implementation Project has not yet been fully defined in this way, a framework for evaluating the project has been developed and is included at Attachment 1.

The results of this assessment are largely summarized in the "*Recommended Changes to the Framework Plan*" presented above. The detailed assessment is included at Attachment 2.

Project Chronicle

Development of a "project chronicle" has begun and is presented under separate cover. In addition, recommendations have been presented regarding managing documentation arising from the project as well as documents from other sources relevant to ECR.

In order to sustain the ongoing development of a project chronicle throughout the ECR Implementation Project, DJA should focus only on key events and documents. In particular, the chronicle should include:

> 1. A narrative describing major events and turning points in the project. SMG/Columbia has begun the narrative for the period from 1994 to date. SMG/Columbia will work with project principals to ensure major events and key

ECR Project Assessment Report

documents are included in the chronicle. Continuing the ECR project narrative will a responsibility for DJA after the conclusion of the consulting assignment.

2.   Major reports and documents developed in the course of the project should be included in the chronicle.

3.   Project status reports prepared by the ECR Project Manager on a monthly basis.

4.   A limited number of documents from other sources may be included in the chronicle. Documents with particular relevance to the ECR Implementation Project can be selected for in the chronicle.

The documents forming the ECR project chronicle should be stored in both paper form and, for documents created as part of the project, in electronic source form (e.g., Word, Project, Excel).

Further development of the project chronicle should be incorporated as specific tasks in the project work plan. Updates of the chronicle should occur at the same time as the periodic evaluations of the project as anticipated by the "project evaluation model", i.e., as part of an assessment the narrative should be extended and project and other documents selected for inclusion in the chronicle.

Other Findings and Recommendations

Other findings and recommendations are included as Attachment 2 to this report.

Recommendations for Project Support Activities

Based on the current priorities for and the other resources assigned to ECR Project, SMG/Columbia should provide support in the following areas:

• Finalize the "design statement" which defines the "target" for the ECR Implementation Project for the year 2000.
• Develop an initial assessment of the financial, operational, public service, and other impacts of the ECR system.

• Assist DJA in building its preliminary plan for the ECR Implementation Project.

• Update the project evaluation model based on scope of and plan for ECR implementation.

ECR Project Assessment Report

In addition, SMG/Columbia will continue the project chronicle and carry out project assessments.

ATTACHMENT 1

Project Evaluation Model

Project Evaluation Model

Purpose of Project Evaluation

Project evaluation is a central element of risk management for information technology and process redesign projects. These evaluations are intended to identify the main risks associated with the project so they may be avoided or the impacts mitigated. In particular, periodic assessments of the ECR project should be carried out to address the following questions regarding the project:

- Should the Department of Judicial Administration continue to carry out the project?

- Are changes required to ensure the success of the project?

By periodically "stepping back" from the details of the project and considering these fundamental issues, the Department can minimize the risk that the ECR Project is misdirected. Project evaluations may lead to changes in the ECR Project's objectives, scope, approach, work plan, schedule, or other aspects of the plan.

Please note that this type of approach to project evaluation is more basic than the typical "compliance-oriented" assessment. Compliance-oriented reviews focus on contract administration, execution of work plans, financial controls, and so forth. This approach, while valuable, does not adequately consider whether a project should be undertaken or whether it is likely to achieve the intended business results.

Approach to Project Evaluation

The approach to evaluating the ECR Project proposed here is based on the following key concepts:

- Phases of the project life cycle.
- "Strategic" and "tactical" perspectives.
- Project complexity.
- Risk management orientation.

The impact of these concepts on project assessment are discussed in the following sections.

Project Life Cycle

Project evaluation differs depending on where in the life cycle the project is assessed. The "project life cycle" is variously described, but typically includes the following phases:

- Vision building.

Project Evaluation Model

- Project planning.
- Design.
- Development and/or procurement.
- Implementation.
- Post-implementation support and modifications.
- Ongoing operation and maintenance.

As one proceeds through a project life cycle the ability to control final outcomes *decreases*. This is due to the fact that as scope and design decisions are made, as funds are expended, and as time passes, material changes in direction require more "rework" to implement. It is very important that during the initial stages of a project particular attention be given to ensuring that the basic decisions concerning objectives, scope, and approach are well-founded. The focus of evaluation is prospective, i.e., it considers whether future activities are appropriate and likely to be successful.

As a project proceeds into the more substantive, structured phases of the life cycle, project evaluation becomes more "retrospective", i.e., on whether activities completed were appropriate and successful. Compliance-oriented assessments are more important in these later phases of the life cycle.

The ECR Project is now in the planning phase. The focus of project evaluation is on ensuring that the project work plan is achievable, reflects a realistic assessment of the constraints facing the Department, and promises to meet the business objectives of the Superior Court, DJA, and related agencies and users.

Tactical v. Strategic Perspectives

The "strategic perspective" focuses on long term objectives such as why the project is being done and what is being undertaken. The "tactical perspective" focuses on planned versus actual results.

Prior to 1997, the ECR initiative was in a preliminary phase focused on developing a vision and building support among interested parties. During 1997, the ECR project team focused on defining the scope for the project. A work program for implementing the envisioned system and business processes is being written.

In the planning phase, the focus of project evaluation is on the appropriateness of the plans, not implementation. The "appropriateness of project plans" can best be assessed in terms of the objectives of the project, strategically and tactically:

1. Strategic Perspective:

Project Evaluation Model

- Have strategic objectives been defined?
- Are the defined objectives consistent with business constraints, including the capacity of the organization to undertake the necessary changes?
- Are the defined objectives consistent with the strategic objectives of the organization?
- Do the strategic objectives address fundamental challenges facing the organization?
- What are the fundamental barriers to achieving the objectives?

    2.   Tactical Perspective:

- Has a realistic project work program been developed?
- If executed successfully, does it appear that the work program will produce the desired results?
- Does the organization have the capacity to carry out the defined work program?
- Have the major risks been addressed with action steps in the work program?
- Have competent individuals and teams been put in place to direct and manage the project?

In later phases of the project, the emphasis of project assessment shifts:

    1.   Strategic Perspective:

- Have the strategic objectives of the project changed? If so, are they clearly defined?
- Do the strategic objectives remain achievable?
- Has the business strategy of the organization or its environment changed, indicating the need to modify the objectives or plans for the project?
- What are the major obstacles to the success of the project? Are these addressed by tasks in the project work plan?

    2.   Tactical Perspective:

- Is the project proceeding in accordance with the project work plan:
    - ➢ On budget?
    - ➢ On schedule?
    - ➢ Resources?
- Are project management mechanisms in place and effective for:
    - ➢ Contract administration?
    - ➢ Budget management?
    - ➢ Deliverable/schedule tracking?
    - ➢ Issue tracking?
    - ➢ Quality control?
- Do deliverables meet specifications?
- What are the major issues facing the project? What actions will resolve these issues?

Project Complexity

Another consideration which affects the approach to project assessment is complexity in the project plan when there are more than one distinct subprojects, as is the case in the ECR Project.

The ECR Project has several distinct subprojects. These include the core project (i.e., technical architecture and standards development, scope definition, work plan development, business case development), the microfilm replacement project, and stakeholder involvement activities, Criminal Case Demonstrations, policy and rules review, and more.

Further, the ECR Project is part of a broader initiative to "reengineer" court system operations. There are other current or planned projects at the local, county, and state-wide levels which may affect the ECR Implementation Project.

The ECR Implementation Project subprojects include microfilm replacement scanning, stakeholder involvement, a policy and legal issue review, plus the core system implementation. The ECR Implementation Project also must be developed in light of the CMIS project, JIS initiatives, implementation of the digital signature law, and the Law, Safety, and Justice Integration Initiative.

Complex projects with close connections to other separately managed projects are more difficult to manage and evaluate. The success of the project is influenced by events outside the control of the Department. Project evaluation in this environment must take note of external issues and actions affecting success.

Risk Management Focus

The emphasis of project evaluation is risk management. Specific (strategic or tactical) risks should be identified and strategies implemented to mitigate them.

Project evaluation should be part of a broader risk management strategy. Aspects of risk management which are beyond the scope of project evaluation include financial controls, legal / contractual protections, internal project management controls, and technical quality control.

ECR Evaluation Topics

In order to evaluate the ECR Project, many strategic and tactical aspects should be considered, including:

Project Evaluation Model

1. STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE
    1. Objectives
        1. DJA Objectives
            1. Operational
            2. Public Service
            3. Financial
        2. Superior Court Objectives
        3. Other Party Objectives
    2. Project Justification
        1. Financial
        2. Public Service
        3. Business Operations
        4. Other
    3. Risks to Achievement of Objectives
        1. Business Environment
        2. Organizational Constraints
        3. Legal / Policy Environment
        4. Technology
        5. Schedule
        6. Costs and Resources
        7. Vendor
        8. Operational Issues
2. TACTICAL PERSPECTIVE
    1. Work Program
        1. Goals/Outputs
        2. Work Plan (activities, schedule, and deliverables)
        3. Resources
        1.
    2. Project Management
        1. Plan Development
        2. Plan Implementation
            1. Progress Tracking
            2. Expenditure Control
            3. Quality Control
            4. Issue Tracking
            5. Acceptance Testing
            6. Contract Administration
        3. Quality Assurance

Project Evaluation Model

3. Oversight and Governance
4. Coordination with Related Projects / Initiatives
   1. County
      1. CMIS
      2. LSJ Integration
      3. Other
   2. State
      1. SCOMIS / JIS
      2. Judgment and Statute Databases
      3. Forms Development
      4. State Policies on Electronic Records and Filings
      5. Other
5. Risks to Implementation of Plan
   1. Legal / Policy Constraints
   2. Scope Expansion
   3. Technology Inadequacies
   4. Schedule
   5. Costs
   6. Vendor
   7. Operational
   8. Human Resources
6. Stakeholder Involvement

Evaluation of the project should not be limited to these areas. Any factor which affects strategic aspects of the project should be considered.

Project Evaluation Process

A "Quality Assurance (QA) Reviewer" should be appointed to evaluate the ECR Project as described above. This person should be independent of the project team and should report to the Project Sponsor.

The QA Reviewer must be involved with the project team on an ongoing basis. Tasks include reviewing deliverables and status reports, attending key meetings, informal discussions with project team members, etc.

The QA Reviewer should document issues of concern and recommendations for discussion with the Project Manager or other project personnel. Strategies for resolving issues will be developed cooperatively with the project team. If there isn't agreement about the issues of

Project Evaluation Model

concern or where the strategies are not effective, these matters should be taken up with the Project Sponsor.

In addition, the QA Reviewer should complete comprehensive assessments of the project periodically. Assessments should occur at major milestones of the project, and where important decisions are taken regarding design, expenditure, acceptance of deliverables, project work programs, and so forth. Such reviews should occur three times a year.

ATTACHMENT 2

Project Evaluation Findings and Recommendations

Project Evaluation Findings and Recommendations

Strategic Perspective

Project Progress Since Previous Assessment

The ECR Project has made significant progress. Some of the accomplishments are:

- Definition of a technology strategy to support the implementation of the ECR system.
- Development of a "design statement" setting forth the scope and functionality of the system.
- Development of initial cost estimates for implementing ECR.
- Identification and discussion of a number of policy and legal issues.
- Selection of a technology platform for microfilm replacement scanning. This platform will also support pilot testing and experimentation.

A detailed work plan, setting out the planned implementation strategy and defining the staffing and funding requirements, is now being prepared.

Confirm ECR Implementation Project Scope

The ECR Implementation Project Design Statement and preliminary implementation schedule has been developed in a "top-down" manner, on the basis of the business objectives of the Department of Judicial Administration and its project partners.

The ECR project scope is very large. The Department's detailed work plan will define the human and technology resources, time, and cost required to implement the system. This "bottom-up" analysis is required to demonstrate that the project is justified. Based on the work plan, DJA may need to modify the scope, functionality, or implementation schedule for the project.

Clarify and Document Project Objectives

The expected outcomes of the ECR Implementation Project have been articulated, but have not been formally documented. They include financial, operational, and public service benefits for the Court, DJA, other agencies, litigants, and the public. The specific objectives which will form the "goalposts" for the ECR Implementation Project should be documented in a concise statement of project objectives. This is planned for the near future.

Manage Scope of the ECR Implementation Project

Project Evaluation Findings and Recommendations

Limiting the scope of the project is necessary for project management purposes. There will be pressures to expand the scope of the project to serve more requirements or meet objectives for others.

Electronic Court Records is part of a broader set of initiatives which can substantially reengineer the administrative operations of the justice system in King County. The "ECR Implementation Project", with a specific scope, schedule, and work products, will help DJA keep the scope manageable.

There are several mechanisms which DJA can employ to manage the scope of the ECR Implementation Project:

- Communicating the scope of the project to stakeholders so there is a clear statement of what the ECR system will and will not do.
- Requirements not met by the ECR Implementation Project can be addressed by other concurrent or subsequent projects which are funded and staffed independently.
- Enhancements to the ECR system can be incorporated into the planning for future releases of the system.
- Requiring formal assessment of the impact of any proposed scope changes on the project budget, staffing requirements, schedule, etc. Changes should be approved only if the necessary funding and resources are assured.

Potential Scope Problems

There are two technology groups within the Superior Court system. One group is within Superior Court Administration and the other in the Department of Judicial Administration. This split, which reflects the separation of support functions between the Court and the Clerk, makes it crucial that:

- There are clear, unambiguous lines of management responsibility for the project.
- Management responsibility is consistent with management authority.

In practical terms this means that it is prudent for the ECR Implementation Project to address areas within the purview of DJA. This means that there must be some exclusions from the scope of the project, including:

- Development, implementation, and operation of "in-court" applications.
- Development, implementation, and operation of interfaces between the CMIS system and the ECR system.

Project Evaluation Findings and Recommendations

DJA should not expand the scope of the project to include these or other interdepartmental requirements until more effective mechanisms for managing technology on a court-wide basis are in place.

It is not clear that all stakeholders have fully understood or accepted these limitations in the scope of the ECR Implementation Project.

Law, Safety, and Justice Integration

King County has a "Business Area Committee" to oversee information technology (IT) investments in law, safety, and justice. This committee is composed of senior representatives of King County justice system agencies. The committee has decided to focus IT investments by the County on interagency "integration."

The ECR Initiative is clearly the type of interagency integration project which is envisioned by the "Law, Safety, and Justice (LSJ) Initiative." It could be advantageous for the Court and the Clerk to coordinate technology funding requests to ensure there is agreement as to the relative priority of projects serving the Judiciary, Court Administration, and DJA.

Confirm ECR System "Market" Assumptions

In developing the Design Statement for the ECR system, assumptions were made regarding its impact on stakeholders. Some of these assumptions include:

- Electronic filing, properly designed and delivered, will be beneficial to many attorneys and litigants.
- Digital documents will be easier to create, transfer, and use than digitized (i.e., scanned) document images.
- Quicker, easier access to documents from remote locations is valuable to those making use of the court file.
- An electronic "self service" approach is acceptable to agencies to whom DJA currently forwards documents.

These assumptions seem reasonable, in light of the feedback from various stakeholder representatives who have been involved in the project to date. DJA should expand its consultations with key groups to provide greater assurance that the system design works for them. These consultations should cover business issues such as hours of service, payment for services, cost impact on users, etc.

Project Evaluation Findings and Recommendations

Sustaining Judicial Support and Involvement

The ECR Initiative has enjoyed a high level of support by members of the Judiciary. Several Judges, including the Presiding Judge, have been actively involved in the project to date. The continuing support of the judiciary will make the ECR Initiative successful. DJA should look for opportunities to involve all members of the Bench in the project in order to build support. An early demonstration of the results of the scanning project is advisable.

Technology and Vendor Risks

Electronic document management (EDM) technology, the technical platform for ECR, is undergoing rapid change. Obsolescence is, therefore, a risk. Rapid change in technology also makes it difficult to select technology vendors who will survive and prosper.

The ECR Implementation Project has taken several steps to minimize the technology and vendor-related risks:

- Extensive research into the technology strategies of other court jurisdictions has been done.

- The archival storage strategy, using computer-output-to-microfilm, helps limit risks associated with being "locked into" an obsolete technology or unstable vendor.
- Pilot testing of EDM technology, using the interim "microfilm replacement" system, will provide an opportunity to confirm the choice of technology. Investments in this interim solution have been minimized.
- A competitive procurement for EDM technology will provide an opportunity to evaluate proposed systems and vendors.
- The department has obtained substantial technical assistance from external consultants and King County ITS staff.

While these steps help to minimize technology and vendor-related risks, some risk remains. DJA should assess vendor and technology risks throughout the ECR Implementation Project as part of the ongoing evaluation process.

Digital Signatures

The longer term success of ECR requires an electronic equivalent to original signatures on paper documents. This is required in order that digital documents and remotely filed documents are considered to be valid. The Washington State digital signature law comes into

Project Evaluation Findings and Recommendations

effect on January 1, 1998. How soon the implementation of this law will reach the County is not known.

While this does not present an immediate risk to the project, many efficiencies and service improvements will require electronic signatures. If DJA cannot rely on digital signatures, then alternative mechanisms may need to be used (e.g., issuing "personal identification numbers" to document filers).

DJA should actively pursue implementation and use of legal digital signatures. If "workarounds" are required, DJA should assess what changes are required in the work plan.

Project Evaluation Findings and Recommendations

Tactical Perspective

Development of ECR Project Plan

The development of a work program for 1998 and high level plan for subsequent years is the immediate priority for the ECR Implementation Project. This work plan will include:

- Project administration and management.
- Decision regarding the scope of ECR in 1998 and subsequent years.
- Preparation for and subsequent implementation of "ECR 98".
- Planning for "ECR 99" and subsequent expansion of the ECR system.
- Legal and policy issues.
- Stakeholder involvement and communications.
- "Microfilm replacement" scanning and elimination of hard copy backlogs.

Project Management Approach

There are several project management techniques which should be considered for the ECR Implementation Project. These are as follows:

- A "rolling wave" approach to project planning is recommended where additional detail about upcoming project activities is developed as the project proceeds.
- There should be three planning horizons in the work plan:
    1. The current quarter (1997Q4).
    2. 1998.
    3. 1999 to project completion.
- The project work plan should distinguish as several subprojects activities such as microfilm replacement and the criminal demonstration pilot. Where possible, responsibility for managing subprojects should be delegated.
- The focus for progress tracking should be on key milestones and acceptance of deliverables.
- Formal mechanisms should be used for issue tracking. This should include mechanisms to document the issues, assign responsibility for resolution of each issue, and documenting the results.
- Project evaluations should be ongoing. Comprehensive evaluations should be conducted prior to major decision points.

ECR Implementation Project Oversight

Project Evaluation Findings and Recommendations

A Steering Committee for the ECR Implementation Project has been established. This committee is composed of a variety of representatives of different stakeholder groups, including the Judiciary, the Prosecutor's Office, Court of Appeals, other King County agencies, the Bar, commercial users of court records etc. This committee is a useful forum for discussing policy issues and understanding external stakeholder concerns. It should continue to perform this function.

A smaller, more focused group composed of individuals with direct management responsibility for ECR should undertake oversight and direction of the ECR Project. A "Project Oversight" group composed of the Clerk, Court leadership, and the Project Manager would receive monthly status reports, provide executive direction and guidance, liaise with funding groups, and take strategic decisions.

Controlling the Scope of the Implementation Project

There is a need to balance the potential benefits from ECR with the need to have a manageable project. DJA should "protect" the scope of the ECR Implementation Project by communicating its defined and limited extent to stakeholders. This represents a change from the Department's previous advocacy role in promoting the potential of ECR to advance broader reforms in the judicial system.

Interfacing with Statewide Systems

The interface between SCOMIS and the ECR system is very important to the success of the project. It raises both technical and organizational issues. From a technical perspective, the project team anticipates that a basic "screen scraper" interface could be used in the initial releases of the ECR system. Additional analysis and design is required if a more technically sophisticated interface is needed.

An interface between SCOMIS and the ECR system may require the cooperation of State officials. Agreements may be needed to specify conditions concerning data quality, hours of operation, backup/recovery requirements for interface failures, cost sharing arrangements, etc. DJA should begin to develop the necessary agreements with state officials as soon as possible.

ECR Project Resources

Project Evaluation Findings and Recommendations

DJA will require personnel to undertake a variety of "one time" activities to implement the ECR system, including:

- Designing work flows and operating processes.
- Defining functional requirements.
- Configuring the electronic document management and workflow applications.
- Developing technical designs for custom developed components.
- Configuring and implementing workstations and networks.
- Training users and supervisors.

While a project work plan has not quantified resource requirements in detail, it is clear that DJA does not have adequate internal resources to complete the project. There are several potential sources of additional staff, including:

- Personnel from ITS or other County agencies.
- Contract staff.
- Consultants provided by vendors of the selected technology vendors.
- Systems integrators/development firms.

These are not, of course, mutually exclusive alternatives. DJA should consider how it will staff the project when developing the project work plan. In addition, DJA should consider how its staffing strategy is related to the procurement of the ECR system platform. In particular, DJA should evaluate if, how, and when any contracted services relate to the acquisition of EDM technology.

Testing Computer-Output-to-Microfilm

Computer-output-to-microfilm (COM) is an important element of the technology strategy of the ECR system. Using COM to archive complete cases provides several benefits, including:

- It ensures that DJA meets its obligations for indefinite case file retention.
- It ensures the acceptability of electronic storage media for archival purposes.
- It provides a mechanism to manage the volume of records in the ECR system, thereby controlling growth in storage capacity.
- It provides a "lowest common denominator," document images on film, for both digital and digitized records. This minimizes the technology risks posed as electronic document formats change.

DJA should conduct tests to confirm that the COM strategy works. This includes creating COM from document images and ensuring the acceptability of film produced in this manner. Conducting such tests will demonstrate that this aspect of the technology strategy is viable.

Project Evaluation Findings and Recommendations

King County Internet Strategy

The Design Statement proposes using the Internet for several important ECR services, including remote electronic filing, public access to documents, routing documents to other agencies, and "self service" document retrieval.

This Internet-based strategy has important advantages for the Department, court system users, and the public. It is also consistent with emerging trends in the public and private sectors. King County does not yet have a fully defined strategy for delivering government services over the Internet. Issues being discussed within the County include public-private sector partnerships and electronic payment standards.

A common County Internet strategy would support the timely implementation of the Internet-based components of the ECR system. DJA should remain actively involved in the County's technology standards and policy setting process to try to avoid delays that would affect the ECR project schedule. Alternatives to a common County-wide Internet service should be considered for delivering ECR services.

Estimating ECR System Capacity Requirements

A preliminary estimate of the costs associated with acquiring, implementing, and operating the ECR system has been done. These cost estimates are preliminary. DJA can minimize the risk that the system might be "under-configured" by taking the following steps:

- Define precisely the functions of the ECR system.
- Estimate access and demand patterns and volumes.
- Conduct a technical quality assurance review of the proposed configuration.
- Include features to measure demand and system performance.
- Include performance testing steps in the project work plan.

Conclusion

The ECR Project has significant potential to provide significant benefits to the King County Superior Court and the public. The proposed system is consistent with the strategies of other leading jurisdictions as well as broader trends toward electronic commerce. The technology strategy of DJA is practical and achievable.

The Department of Judicial Administration should proceed with the ECR Project.

King County
Department of Judicial Administration

King County Department of Judicial Administration

Electronic Court Records Project

Deliverable 3 - B: Final 1997 Assessment Report
1997-12-31

SJI

King County Department of Judicial Administration

Electronic Court Records Project

Deliverable 3 - B: Final 1997 Assessment Report
1997-12-31

Table of Contents

ECR Project Assessment Report

Introduction

Under a grant provided by the State Justice Institute, SMG/Columbia Consulting Group was engaged by the King County Department of Judicial Administration (DJA) to provide management consulting support to the Electronic Court Records (ECR) Implementation Project. This report presents the final assessment of the ECR Implementation Project under this contract. The assessment reflects progress to date through the end of 1997.

As noted in the previous project assessment, DJA had decided it was necessary to focus the project on the implementation of a "core" system in 1998. The core ECR system will establish systems to enable internal electronic processing of documents in the Department. The objective for 1998 is to establish the full infrastructure to allow for handling scanned images of documents in "production" by the fourth quarter. Some of the specific actions taken to implement this decision include:

- Initial planning for procurement of the system. The procurement will follow a "fast-track" approach recommended by SMG to King County to ensure the earliest possible implementation of the core ECR system.

- Modification of the draft work program for 1998 to reflect this approach.

- Focusing the stakeholder involvement process to ensure that both internal and external groups have a realistic view of the objectives for the project during 1998.

The ECR Implementation Project is now proceeding to conduct the procurement of hardware, software, and services required to implement the core ECR system.

Recommended Changes to the Framework Plan

We recommend that DJA finalize its project work plan for 1998. DJA should also formalize certain project management practices. This includes the following:

- Clearly define project milestones by month for 1998. Milestones will provide a baseline for measuring progress in the project. Milestones which cannot be scheduled precisely because they depend on completion of earlier activities should still be identified, to be scheduled once details are known.

- Document the roles, responsibilities, and reporting relationships of all project team members. This will provide clearer expectations for the stakeholder involvement team

ECR Project Assessment Report

(DJA's "ECR Communications Team"), the workflow team (DJA's "EDM Workflow Team"), and the archival scanning team at the Regional Justice Center.

- Document the roles and responsibilities of committees overseeing the project, including the DJA project management committee (DJA's "ECR Operations Committee"), and the multi-department and organization steering committee.

- Formalize and standardize project status reporting. This will include reports by subproject team leaders (e.g., on stakeholder involvement activities) and for the project as a whole by the ECR Manager. Project status reports will summarize progress (compared to the original baseline and planned milestones), financial status, and issues raised and/or resolved during each reporting period. Recipients for each report will also be specified.

Where possible, DJA should devote additional staff resources to the ECR Implementation Project. In particular, adding an experienced systems development professional to assist and advise the Project Manager will be very valuable.

Summary of Findings from Stakeholder Consultations

In November 1997, a cross-functional team of DJA employees was charged with responsibility for developing and implementing a systematic program of communicating with stakeholder groups regarding the ECR Implementation Project. With the assistance of the SMG/Columbia Consulting Group, the communications team decided to address both internal (i.e., DJA staff) and external stakeholder groups. The team also decided that additional "customer" research should be done to help focus ECR Implementation Project communications.

The communications team conducted focus groups with legal support staff from private law firms and with DJA staff in a number of meetings at all DJA sites. Some of the principal findings of this research are:

- A communications strategy for DJA staff is needed. Staff focus groups in January asking staff how they would like to learn about ECR developments will help develop the in-house communications plan.

- First formal consultations with legal support staff from private law firms confirm the expectation of significant interest by the Bar in the ECR Implementation Project. Since DJA has concluded that connectivity for outside entities such as law firms will be addressed in later phases, now called the "extended ECR" system, DJA must be careful to manage stakeholder expectations. Unrealistic expectations, however raised, can lead to generally negative attitudes toward the whole ECR project. The ECR Implementation Project focuses in 1998 on implementing core ECR systems. This foundation, upon which the extended

ECR Project Assessment Report

ECR system will be constructed, addresses important needs of the private Bar and other external groups, but does not promise direct remote connectivity, which they will naturally be inclined to look toward.

- Participants in the legal support staff focus group suggested that DJA consult with information technology staff of the major law firms prior to setting technology standards for the ECR system. This is good advice, for it can help to avoid conflicts that might limit external user acceptance.

When the focus groups are completed in the first quarter of 1998, a detailed work plan for ongoing involvement of internal and external stakeholders will be developed to guide the next phase of the ECR Communications project. This is considered an integral part of the overall ECR Implementation Project work plan.

Interim Evaluation of ECR Initiative

Strategic Perspective

From a strategic perspective, SMG/Columbia Consulting's assessment of the ECR Implementation Project is essentially unchanged from the previous report. King County has achieved a great deal in ECR Implementation, pursuing an ambitious implementation plan while trying to maintain co-operative relations with stakeholders and other interests. The fulfilment of the complete concept for the ECR Implementation Project depends on a number of factors, not all of which are controlled by DJA. These include:

- Funding for successive phases of the ECR Implementation Project.

- Resolving all legal and policy issues associated with the introduction of electronic court records, electronic filing, and related issues.

- Co-ordination with information systems and initiatives of the Superior Court and other King County law, safety, and justice agencies.

- Acceptance of electronic court records and the ECR system, along with practices such as electronic communication and digital signatures, by users of the court system.

- Development of more comprehensive standards for electronic commerce and records management by the County, State of Washington, or the legal community.

ECR Project Assessment Report

The project team and the leadership of DJA are addressing all of these issues. Where these matters are beyond the control of DJA, there is a material possibility that the long-term objectives of the ECR Implementation Project might not be met. To address these external risks, DJA adopted the approach of implementing the ECR system in phases, or modules. Each module provides operational or other benefits to the court system and the public, even if subsequent modules are not implemented. This approach mitigates the risks from these external factors.

The ECR Implementation project will demonstrate strategic success in 1998 if the core ECR system is implemented and funding is secured for 1999. (Funding has already been identified for 1999 for this project, but it must be allocated based on a formal request late in 1998.)

Tactical Perspective

The objective of implementing the core ECR system by the fourth quarter of 1998 is a very aggressive one. DJA will need a disciplined approach to meet this schedule. DJA should follow a clearly defined work plan with regular progress reporting.

The core ECR system will form the foundation of the complete system. Technology choices made during 1998 will affect future develop of the system. DJA should seek development of a technical architectural plan for the extended ECR system as a major deliverable for its 1998 vendor(s). DJA should also make sure the vendor or vendors contracted to provide the core ECR system do not bias the architecture to favor their own products and/or services. The architectural design to be delivered by Cary Information Consulting in the first quarter of 1998 may be particularly helpful as a model for the later architectural design, in that Cary is contractually not allowed to have a financial interest in the ultimate ECR system.

There are other information system projects proposed or under way within the Superior Court and DJA. Given the limited resources available to both the Court and DJA, priorities must be set and resources allocated accordingly. DJA knows it must work with the information technology management committee of the Court, Superior Court Administration, and the State Judicial Information System (JIS) to be confident the ECR Implementation Project will receive sufficient funding, staffing, and judicial and management support.

Project Chronicle

A revised project chronicle is being presented under separate cover.

Other Findings and Recommendations

ECR Project Assessment Report

In addition to the recommendations noted above regarding the framework plan for the ECR Implementation Project, we also recommend the following:

- The scope of the overall ECR Implementation Project is very broad. To be successful, DJA has concluded it will implement ECR in a series of phases. DJA must avoid "scope creep" in the Core ECR phase set for 1998 and in subsequent phases.

- The long-term success of the ECR system depends on the extent to which external stakeholders will file and retrieve documents electronically. To minimize the possibility that technical decisions taken during 1998 will create barriers for potential external users, DJA should organize one of its focus groups on this topic while the procurement process is underway. DJA should invite information systems staff from law firms and other potential case record users to review and comment on the technology standards planned for the core ECR system.

- One of the major deliverables for 1998 is a detailed technology architecture for the extended ECR system. DJA will do well to invite potential external users to comment on these standards before finalizing them. The purpose of this consultation is to make sure the selected standards facilitate and encourage use of the extended ECR system by external parties.

- DJA should finalize and obtain formal approval for its procurement plan as soon as possible.

- DJA should prepare estimates which document expected costs and benefits for the overall ECR Implementation Project. Similar analyses should be prepared for each phase, or module. Such projections can serve as yardsticks against which to measure strategic success, just as project work programs measure tactical success. Benefits should not be limited to financial benefits only. The ECR system will provide improvements in public service, access to justice, access to the public court record, and more efficient operation of the court system as a whole.

Recommendations for Project Support Activities

During the remainder of the project support contract SMG/Columbia should help complete and assemble the Implementation Project's documentation and reports, assist DJA in starting the procurement of the core ECR system, and help the ECR communications project team to plan ongoing stakeholder involvement activities.